

Nebraska Public Service Commission - Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program Policies and Procedures

I. Policies Relating to Applicants.

A. Eligibility Requirements. Participation in this program is made by application. Applicants must meet all of the following eligibility requirements:

1. Individuals must have a hearing, visual and hearing loss, or speech disability that prevents them from using the telephone effectively;
2. The individual is three years of age or older, and can demonstrate the ability to use the equipment;
3. The person has telephone service or has applied for telephone service in the state of Nebraska at their primary place of residence;
4. The person is a current resident of the state of Nebraska;
5. The individual has not applied in this program within a five (5) year period (*only one person per household may be an owner of telecommunications equipment at one time and you cannot reapply for assistance more than once every five years*);
6. In addition to the above requirements, the applicant must obtain a professional's certification of your disability. This requirement is satisfied by having the representative completing the reverse side of the application form.

B. Dual Disabled Applicants. Applicants who are "dual-disabled," that is who are Deaf/Blind or who are severely hearing impaired/vision impaired may have special equipment needs and are exempt of the Part II policies relating to equipment selection, subject to the following guidelines:

1. **Tactile Ring Signalers.** Persons desiring tactile ring signalers (vibrating devices) need to complete a separate application form (yellow in color). This supplemental application requires a professional's certification that due to severe visual and hearing impairments, the applicant could not benefit from the use of an audible or visual ring signaler, but could benefit from the use of a tactile ring signaler.
2. **TTY and Large Visual Display or/Telebrailler.** Persons desiring a TTY equipped with a Large Visual Display device ("LVD") or a Telebrailler

must also complete a separate application form (same form as above). This supplemental application requires a professional certification that due to severe visual impairments, the applicant could not benefit from the use of a TTY with standard display, but could benefit from the use of a TTY equipped with a Large Visual Display (“LVD”) or a Telebrailier.

Applicants who satisfy the criteria of Dual Disabled will have the “Special Authorization” check box selected on the voucher form.

C. Reapplying. Reapplying in this program is subject to the following policies:

1. You can reapply only after serving a five year waiting period from the date of your previous application if you received equipment previously;
2. You can reapply if your medical condition has changed to the extent that it now requires you to use different equipment. Special approval by the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will be required.

II. Policies Relating to Equipment Selection.

- A. Specialized Telephone Equipment.** Applicants can only choose one (1) piece of telephone equipment per household (noted as Part 1 on the application form). A sample list of telephone equipment categories that are acceptable is provided in Chart 1 following these policies and procedures.

If applicants chose a printing TTY, only six (6) rolls of TTY paper are allowed.

- B. Notification Systems (telephone signaling devices that alert you).** Applicants can only choose one (1) type of signaling device, either a 1) Telephone Visual Ring Signaler; 2) Loud Ringer Signaler or; 3) Tactile Ring Signaler per household. If you choose a visual ring signaler, you can have one transmitter and a maximum of two (2) additional remote receivers. A sample list of signaling devices that are acceptable are provided in Chart 2 following these policies and procedures. Only one loud ringer or one tactile ring signaler is allowed.
- C. Vendor Responsibilities.** Vendors may not alter vouchers in any way without receiving prior permission from the Public Service Commission Coordinator. Vendor invoices submitted for payment that reflect equipment that does not qualify for reimbursement will require the vendor to seek payment from the applicant.

III. Policies Relating to Setup costs, Equipment Maintenance, Repairs and Warranties.

- A. **Setup Costs.** Costs the vendor incurs in labor for equipment setup and providing instructional guidance on use of the equipment may be billed to the Commission on the same invoice as the equipment sale. Any premise wiring (i.e. “inside wire”), materials or any other additional construction costs related to installation shall be the responsibility of the applicant.
- B. **Equipment Maintenance.** Since the applicant owns the equipment, generally, the applicant would need to take the equipment to a repair service that is qualified to perform any maintenance that the product instructs the owner to make. Applicants absorb the cost for these services.
- C. **Repairs & Warranties.** For servicing of equipment that goes beyond the date of the express (written) warranty that goes with the product, generally the applicant would follow the same procedure as explained above.

For servicing of the equipment within the warranty period that go with the product, generally, the applicant will follow the instructions that go with the product for servicing the equipment. This may require the applicant shipping the product directly to the manufacturer or the manufacturer directing the applicant to the party that performs repairs for the manufacturer. Any costs for these repairs are the applicant’s responsibility.

- D. **Extended Warranties.** Applicants are responsible for paying for any extended warranties and are not to be included on the vendor’s invoice to the Public Service Commission.

IV. Procedures For Applicants Regarding the Program.

- A. **Vendor Contact.** When the applicant receives the voucher, you must contact the vendor to order your equipment. After ordering, the applicant is required to sign the line on the voucher titled, “Applicant’s Verification.” This serves as signature verification that the person who applied for the program is the person who ordered the equipment.
- B. **Voucher Delivery.** The applicant is required to deliver all pages of the voucher to the vendor after signing as indicated above.
- C. **Setup costs, Maintenance, Repairs and Warranties.** See Section III above for policies relating to these activities.

V. Vendor Procedures Regarding the Program.

- A. **Approval Process.** Vendors must be apply for participation before submitting vouchers for payment in this program. The application for vendor participation can be obtained by calling statewide toll free at 1-800-526-0017, (402) 471-0225/Voice, (402) 471-0213/TTY or visiting the Commission's web site at www.psc.state.ne.us, chose the Telecommunications Relay Service icon and chose the item for Vendor approval process.
- B. **Equipment Selection.** Vendors are encouraged to contact the Public Service Commission for any questions regarding equipment eligibility.
- C. **Product Knowledge.** Vendors are required to be knowledgeable of all products being offered in this program.
- D. **Voucher and Invoice Processing.** Vendors are required to itemize invoices and the following additional guidelines shall be used:
 - 1. **Setup Costs.** If the applicant requests setup, the vendor may include the actual costs of such to be billed to the Commission on the same invoice as the equipment sale. These costs include labor for equipment setup and providing instructional guidance on use of the equipment. Any premise wiring (i.e. "inside wire"), materials or any other additional construction costs related to installation shall be the responsibility of the applicant.
 - 2. **Payment Authorization:** If the total invoice exceeds \$1,000 (excluding setup costs), the applicant must pay the excess. Setup costs are not counted toward the total invoice portion in determining the \$1,000 limitation.
 - 3. **Special Authorization.** If this box is checked on the voucher, no dollar limitation applies; this applicant is dual disabled. See Section I.B.
 - 4. **Taxes.** Since the Public Service Commission is an exempt organization, no sales taxes (state or local) or any other taxes are to be charged to the individual or to the Commission.

Chart 1 – Sample Categories of Specialized Telecommunications Equipment that Qualify For Selection (You may chose only one).	
Equipment Category	Equipment Function
A. Amplified Telephones.	Increases volume level of incoming calls. Some models enhance the tone and frequency range as well.
B. Cellular Phones (must be amplified or text capable). Only certain models will be allowed. Check with the Public Service Commission.	Wireless, voice-based communication system generally using “line-of-sight” technology. Service area coverage may be limited by a variety of physical and other environmental conditions.
C. Cochlear Implant Phones.	Amplified telephones modified for compatibility with t-coils and cochlear implant processors. Become familiar with the Speech Processor (“SP”) guidelines for cochlear implant users.
D. Computer Conversion Packages.	Software and hardware that enables your PC to work like a TTY. Personal computers do not qualify.
E. Large Visual Displays (Supplemental application required).	Designed for visually impaired. Magnifies the characters in your TTY conversations. Blue-green lens is standard on most models, but other colors are available on most models.
F. Pagers/other wireless devices (Program pays one-time activation and for product only – not the monthly service). Applicant is responsible for determining if the provider covers their service area. (See information sheet following this table for additional discussion on portable wireless devices).	Allows text messaging within the service area covered by the provider. Paging range may be limited to weather and other environmental conditions and “line-of sight” technology.
G. Pocket Speak & Read VCO Phone. Amplified phone cannot be purchased in addition to this device because you are no longer using the earpiece. See equipment function discussion.	Device that attaches to mobile phones, pay phones, cordless phones as well as traditional phones and call boxes. (Works best with analog phones). This device is placed over the earpiece, the relay center is called, and the user speaks into the mouthpiece and read the responses. (Person receiving the VCO call must change their TTY to Baudot).
H. Speech Amplified Telephone (These telephones amplify the outgoing voice).	Designed for people with a low volume voice with loudness control settings.

I. Speech Generating Devices (SGDs)	Designed for severely speech-impaired persons. These communication devices typically generate synthesized speech sounds as a user types on a keyboard or interacts with another input device.
J. Telebraille (Supplemental application required).	Enables deaf/blind individuals to communication using a TTY over a phone system and can be switched to activate home keys and spacebar as a Braille keyboard. Includes Braille display.
K. Telephone Amplifiers.	Devices are required to be plugged into an existing telephone. Note: In-Line amplifiers will NOT work with Trimline telephones or telephones with a dial pad in the handset. They may or may not work with digital telephone systems.
L. TTY/TT (Text Telephones):	
a. Compact/C TTYs;	Smaller, lightweight, ideal for travel. This TTY comes with a TTY-to-cell phone cable that connects to a “handsfree” jack built into compatible digital cellphones.
b. EZcom or / EZcom Pro	EZcom is designed for direct connect only (no acoustic cups). The EZcom Pro is a modified EZcom with audio jack, allowing TTY connection to an analog cellular phone.
c. Portable TTYs;	Smaller, lightweight, ideal for travel.
d. Non-Printing TTYs;	No hardcopy printout of conversation.
e. Printing TTYs;	Printing capabilities built-in.
f. TTYs w/ Large Visual Displays (Supplemental application required because the user must specify lens color);	This category applies to Large Visual Displays that connect to an external port as well as any model having a built-in “LVD” feature.
g. TTY / Voice Answering Machines;	Digital answering machine for Voice and TTY calls.
h. TTY Printer Paper (A maximum of six rolls only is allowed).	Self-explanatory.
M. Uniphones.	These devices are voice carry over TTYs. This all-in-one unit includes a standard telephone, amplified handset, and TTY. Ideal for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people who prefer to voice their calls.
N. Voice Carry Over (VCO) Phones. Note: if VCO with Port is purchased, the Large Visual Display or printer would be allowed as well.	Standard telephone with a visual display to read incoming messages. The port feature (if purchased) allows LVD or printer connections.

<i>Chart 1.1 - Exceptions, – Examples of Equipment that DO NOT Qualify for Equipment Selection</i>	
A. Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). Several types of ALDs include Personal Amplified Systems (hearing aids), Infrared Systems, FM Systems and Loop Systems.	Designed specifically to help people hear in a variety of difficult listening situations. ALDs can be used with a personal hearing aid or separately to overcome difficulties inherent in distance from sound source situations. Basic function is to improve the “signal to noise ratio” for the listener.
B. Installation of materials and/or labor for inside wiring of a home.	Inside wire is a deregulated telephone service and as such is excluded from this program.
C. Pocketalkers (This is technically defined as an Assistive Listening Device).	Personal amplifiers for TV listening and one-on-one communications. Assists in reducing background noise in congested situations.
D. TV equipment and/or accessories.	Closed-captioning is in this category.
E. TTY accessories (other than the TTY paper indicated in L.h, above).	This category includes adapters, TTY covers, etc.

Chart 2 – Sample Categories of Notification Systems (Telephone Signaling Devices) that Qualify For Selection (You may chose only one).	
Equipment Category	Equipment Function
A. (Light) Telephone Visual Ring Signalers (one transmitter and a maximum of up to two remote receivers shall be allowed).	These devices will flash a lamp or strobe to alert the individual to the telephone ringing.
B. Loud Telephone Ringers.	This device will emit a loud ring (on some models a siren) to alert you to incoming calls. Individuals should note that some amplified telephones feature a built-in loud ringer.
C. Tactile Ring Signalers (Vibrating Signaler). Only one allowed. If the applicant is Deaf/Blind, a supplemental application is required.	Attaches to the waist of slacks or skirts. The unit receives signals from a transmitter which, in turn, causes a vibration to alert the individual.
D. Other Category. This category would include manufacturers of Visual alerting and Vibrating systems that monitor a wide variety of household activities. For example, the Alertmaster line of products. If the base unit is sold, only two (2) remote visual ring signalers or one (1) personal signaler would be allowed. Optional accessories sold as Baby Sound Monitors, Door Announcers or Motion Detectors are not allowed.	
<i>Chart 2.1 – Exceptions, Examples of Equipment that DO NOT Qualify For Equipment Selection:</i>	
A. Bed Vibrators.	Self-explanatory.
B. Burglar Alarms.	Self-explanatory.
C. Clocks and Wake-Up Alarm Systems.	Self-explanatory.
D. Doorbell Signalers.	Self-explanatory.
E. Motion Detectors.	Self-explanatory.
F. Smoke or Fire Detectors.	Self-explanatory.
G. Sound Signalers (This includes Baby Sound Monitor).	Self-explanatory.
H. Timers/Watches.	Self-explanatory.

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For Immediate Release

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Hamilton Relay Service**

Hamilton Relay Offers Another Method for Deaf and Hard of Hearing to Place Phone Calls

AURORA, NE –October 1, 2004. Hamilton Relay announced the launch of HIP Relay Wireless, a service that benefits the Deaf and Hard of Hearing by allowing them to use pagers, PDAs, cell phones and other mobile devices to place relay calls. It gives relay users the mobility to place relay calls while on the go. This nationwide service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By having relay access through pagers and mobile devices, relay users now have convenient access to telephone service. Relay users are able to make or receive relay calls from any location – whether they are in the car, a restaurant or airport.

Instead of typing phone conversations on a Text Telephone (TTY), you can now use any mobile device or personal computer that has a WAP browser or that runs the AOL® Instant Messenger™ (AIM®) service to make a relay call through Hamilton. The AIM® Screen Name for Hamilton Relay Services is HipRelay. A Hamilton Communications Assistant ("CA") answers your call and then places another call to the telephone number you wish to reach. The CA then translates and relays your conversations confidentially by converting voice information to typed communication and reading aloud typed messages to hearing persons.

"Hamilton Relay Service is delighted to give relay users access to relay services through mobile devices," says Dixie Ziegler, Vice President of Hamilton Relay. "Hamilton is constantly working to provide communication solutions to meet the needs of its customers. Because the AIM service is free and universal, giving relay users the ability to place Hamilton Relay calls through the AIM Relay Service opens up a whole new way for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech Disabled individuals to communicate."

There are many mobile devices and pagers that work with HIP Relay Wireless. Mobile devices should be equipped with several essentials such as internet access and full keyboard. Users will also need a wireless service plan that allows for text messaging. Additional charges from a user's wireless carrier may apply for sending or receiving text messages.

The following devices are fully compatible with HIP Relay Wireless with a Wireless Access Protocol (WAP) browser (i.e. Blazer):

- RIM® Blackberry®
- PalmOne® Treo™
- Nokia®
- PalmOne® Tungsten™
 - Browser service needs to be added.

The following devices are fully compatible with HIP Relay Wireless with AOL® Instant Messenger™ (AIM®) service:

- Danger[®] Sidekick[™]
- PalmOne[®] Treo[™]
 - AIM[®] service may come with the pager, or it may need to be added.
- PalmOne[®] Tungsten[™]

In addition, anyone using a computer that has a WAP browser or that runs the AIM[®] service can also place calls with HIP Relay. It saves valuable time as the connections to the relay center are exceptionally fast, there is no software to download, and the service is simple to use.

If a particular pager or mobile device is not listed above, there are other wireless devices that may work with HIP Relay Wireless. Individuals who would like more information on using pagers or mobile devices through relay, **or who would like information on receiving voice calls or placing Spanish calls through HIP Relay Wireless**, can visit www.hamiltonrelay.com under the link titled HIP Relay Wireless. Individuals can also contact Hamilton Relay Customer Service at 1-800-618-4781 TTY/V or via email at info@hamiltonrelay.com.

About Hamilton Telecommunications

Hamilton offers a variety of features and services to further enhance relay communication. Hamilton Internet Protocol Relay allows relay consumers to use computers and other web-based devices to connect to Hamilton Relay via the internet rather than a TTY in order to call any hearing telephone user. Hamilton Internet Protocol Video Relay Service enables relay consumers to communicate in American Sign Language or signed English via high-speed internet access and a variety of video conferencing equipment rather than a TTY and typing. Both services are available at www.hamiltonrelay.com.

Hamilton Telecommunications, based in Aurora, Nebraska, currently provides relay services to the states of Nebraska, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Maine, Wyoming and the District of Columbia. Established in 1901, Hamilton also provides local telephone and cable television service, call center services, internet services, computer sales, network integration and much more to customers across the country. For more information, visit Hamilton's website at www.hamiltonrelay.com or call 800-618-4781.